



CASE STUDY

TRANSFORMING RECRUITMENT & CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE FOR A MIDLANDS MANUFACTURER

When the CEO of a Midlands-based manufacturing company reached out to Leitmotif Partners, the business was facing a real challenge. Having recently cut spend on agency recruitment, to save costs, there had been some unintended consequences. Candidates were dropping out mid-process, offers were being rejected, and the overall experience wasn't reflecting the strong values and culture the business had built its reputation on.

The CEO asked Leitmotif Partners to step in and take a fresh look at the situation, to review their recruitment process from end to end and help them get back on track.

“Steph’s input into our processes has been invaluable. She has given our line managers and interviewers a new level of confidence and I myself am confident that we will see a significant positive impact on recruitment process and most importantly, outcomes.” CEO

WHAT WE FOUND

The HR manager was overstretched. She was doing her best to manage advertising, screening, shortlisting, and interview scheduling, but with the sheer volume of applications and the demands of line managers' diaries, candidate communication was inconsistent. She was conscious she didn't have the depth of expertise in some of the roles to confidently select or reject and found it challenging to direct the process and take control of internal stakeholders.

“A key thing I miss about working with consultants is their ability to influence internally, I struggle to make the same demands!” HR Manager

Line managers had no formal structure. Processes varied between departments: informal, chemistry-driven, and often subjective. Many managers admitted they'd never received interview training, weren't entirely confident in **selling** the role and opportunity, and didn't always reference the company's values or the key selling points of working at the organisation.

Culture and employer brand had been lost.

Historically, the business has been very strong on culture and values, a real differentiator in the competitive Midlands manufacturing market. But in interviews, line managers weren't trained to showcase this. Instead of engaging candidates with the positives of the business, interviews often became one-sided fact-finding exercises. Important themes such as CSR, sustainability, and the company's social commitments weren't mentioned consistently, even though they're core to the strategic vision. In some cases, candidates asked about culture and values but didn't get clear answers, or their questions were “parked” for HR follow-up that never came. This left some candidates feeling disengaged and with an incomplete view of the opportunity.

Panel interviews felt overwhelming. Panels of up to four people were more about internal reassurance than assessing candidates effectively.

Competitiveness was mixed. technical roles paid slightly above market rate, but corporate roles were under market. This explained why they were losing candidates at offer stage in corporate delivery

The candidate journey lacked momentum. Delays of up to two weeks before interviews stages created a poor first impression and candidates were lost.

THE IMPACT

By immersing fully into the business, from cradle to grave in the recruitment journey and employee experience, we've created a more structured, candidate-friendly, and values-led process. I continue to support the business each month on a consultancy basis, ensuring line managers have ongoing guidance, and helping the company remain competitive and attractive to the talent they need to thrive.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SME'S

Recruitment in SME's often lands on managers who already have demanding day jobs. Without structure, training, and clear ownership, it's easy for processes to become inconsistent, slow, and one-sided, which costs time, money, and great candidates.

This case shows how SMEs can:

-  Give managers confidence and consistency through training and structured frameworks.
-  Showcase their culture, values, and CSR as real differentiators in competitive markets.
-  Create a seamless candidate journey with clear timelines and touchpoints.
-  Strengthen employer brand appeal without needing big corporate budgets or heavy reliance on agencies.

For SME's competing against larger employers, these are practical, cost-effective steps that level the playing field, ensuring the focus is not only attracting candidates, but securing and retain them.

WHAT WE DID

Working closely with board, hiring managers, HR and a selection of broader team members, we undertook a full audit of recruitment process which resulted in a series of strategic inputs:

Talent planning & benchmarking: We mapped out likely recruitment needs for the next 6–18 months, looked at skills demand and succession planning, benchmarked salaries across all functions, and reviewed competitor packages. This gave the board clarity on where they needed to adjust to stay competitive.

Employer brand & values: Together, we refreshed the employee handbook to better reflect the culture and values that set them apart in a crowded local manufacturing market. I also worked with line managers to help them “sell” the business more effectively in interviews, not just assessing candidates, but showing why the company is a great place to work. We built in talking points around values, culture, CSR and sustainability commitments, and the social aspects of the workplace, so every candidate hears a consistent, authentic message.

Training for hiring managers: Delivered interview training across the board, introducing structured approaches like competency-based interviews and scoring matrices. This gave managers confidence, helped them answer candidate questions more effectively, and removed subjectivity from decision-making.

A standardised process: We created clear timelines for each stage, from job spec creation to offer, with agreed service levels for communication. We also built in an offer and negotiation framework, mitigating further candidate losses at the final hurdle.

Onboarding and beyond: Recruitment doesn't end at offer. I worked with management teams on onboarding, ensuring the candidate experience flows seamlessly into employee experience.

Listening to employees: We introduced employee engagement and satisfaction surveys, feedback loops, and an intranet “ideas hub” so employees could shape the business's culture as it continues to grow.